

PERFINS, SPIFS or PUNCHIES

by

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It is fruitless to argue about taste and it is just as useless for stampcollectors to criticize each others collecting peculiarities.

Does the orthodox stampcollector have valid reasons for looking down upon the perfin collector as "peculiar", a "square", a "junk collector"? I do not think so.

COLLECTING STAMPS WITH HOLES ALSO PHILATELIC WORK.

Let us consider the die-hard collector of mint stamps. To him, only a stamp without the least speck of ink on its surface is worthy of being collected. Stamps, in order to find a place in his collection, must have original gum on the back.

Now, some postal administration decides to overprint an issue or surcharge it with a different value. As a result of this, the face of the stamp is badly marred by ink spots and lines. Yet, this same collector will accept these specimen and grant them space in his collection. If an issue is placed on sale without gum, he will gladly and without hesitation welcome it in his albums.

Why this obviously contradictory attitude? Probably, because the overprint and the ink spots and the omission of gum were officially sanctioned. These stamps, altho not meeting his usual minimum standards, were produced by the government and this fact makes them acceptable to him.

With this reasoning in mind, let us now make a study of the attitude of this same collector towards a stamp with a little round hole in it. He will reject it of course and call it a damaged stamp. But if this hole in the stamp was produced "by the government", if this hole in the stamp was "officially sanctioned", if this hole in the stamp has an "official significance", why does he still object against adding it to his collection? It does not deviate anymore from his minimum standards than the overprinted item did. Basically, the hole is not different from the ink spot or the surcharge discussed above.

Catalogs are sometimes just as inconsequential. Take Scott catalog for instance. Nowhere do we even find mention of the perforated officials. But lo and behold, Paraguay No 37, a stamp, only issued with a large hole in it, is listed and space is provided for it in the specialty albums. Is n't that silly?

Michel mentions some official perfins in footnotes. Yvert goes farther and lists many official perfins but it does not try to be complete.

Our hats off therefor to Minkus and his new world wide set of catalogs. They are excellent and a stimulating experience after what we have been accustomed to for years. And these new Minkus catalogs list in picture and by issue all official perfins wherever issued. A commendable attitude of the editors.

Perfin collectors, philatelists interested especially in stamps with holes are convinced that many of their brethren are missing a lot of fun and collecting opportunities by disregarding this extremely interesting field of philately.

REASON FOR HOLES.

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What are these stamps with holes? Where do we find them? Where do they come from? What was their purpose? Why are they so interesting?

Holes have been made in stamps for a great many reasons, such as:

- 1-to change ordinary stamps into "official" stamps, such as O S perforated in Australian stamps, fig. 1-1
- 2-to change ordinary stamps into "postage due" stamps, such as T perforated in stamps of Tunisia, fig. 1-2
- 3-to clearly mark stamps as having been issued by the department for information purposes only, such as "specimen" perforated in Iraq stamps, fig. 1-3
- 4-To make ordinary stamps out of official stamps, such as the 12 hole perforation in official stamps of Salvador, fig. 1-4
- 5- to make stamps worthless for philatelic purposes and thus force collectors to buy special not mutilated items at a premium over face value. This is said to be the origin of the 3 little holes quite often found in Hungarian stamps of the 1920-1924 period, fig. 1-5. However, another explanation of these 3 holes is, that they were a secret communication between members of an underground movement.
- 6- to make half a stamp usable for postal service at a lower value. This could be done by a vertical, a horizontal or even a diagonal line of perforation, such as Portuguese India 260, fig. 1-6 and Guatemala 277, fig. 2-1
- 7-to lower the value of a stamp; this was done in lieu of overprinting.
- 8-To cancel high value postage stamps used for bulk mailing of newspapers, such as "INUTILIZADO" punched through entire sheets of Argentina 5 and 10 pesos stamps of 1916 and 1917, fig. 2-2
- 9- To indicate the use of postage stamps for other than postal services, such as telegraphic use, vide the single large hole found in Spanish stamps, fig. 2-3
- 10-to cancel stamps attached to bank checks in payment of certain governmental fees, such as part of the word "PAID" in Canadian stamps, fig. 2-4
- 11-To demonitize stamps, withdrawn from circulation but still being sold by private concerns for welfare purposes, such as the crown and letters found on Belgian stamps of the design Minkus 672.
- 12-To identify stamps as having been demonitized, such as found on some Mongolian stamps.
- 13-to identify the original purchaser of the stamps and protect him against pilferage of his stamp box by his personnel.
- 14- to prevent fraudulent use of a stamp, such as Paraguay, Minkus 79, issued punched only to prevent it being used to counterfeit Paraguay, Minkus 73.
- 15-To prevent counterfeiting, such as "specimen" perforated in British

Guyana, Minkus ~~373~~ 82-83 ,which was locally printed,fig.2-5

16- to celebrate a special occasion,such as EIPA 30 perforated in the french airmail stamp,Minkus 373a.

17-to mark a stamp sold by the post office department in large quantities to certain organizations,which in turn sold them at par, an example of which can be found on some italian stamps.

18- to facilitate the use of the stamp half as a receipt to be left attached to a stub,such as Sudan stamps used for telegraphic purposes.

19-to differentiate between stamps sold by the postoffice and those sold by private organizations,such as the wavy line found on stamps of Belgium,Minkus 690.

Whereas about all of these perforations were applied by the postal authorities,those listed sub.13 were made by private persons and organizations.

BIRTH OF PERFINs.

It seems that our fear that the ethical standards of the world today are much lower than in times past is not supported by the facts. Almost as soon as postage stamps came into use we find that complaints about employees stealing them are heard. In those early days stamps were often used to make payments by mail. Money orders were not yet in use, and the postoffices not only sold stamps to the public but also bought them back for cash from whoever had received them in payment of a debt. This gave the thieves a very easy way to dispose of their loot. It is ironic that we find a governmental agency here acting as a fence for the lawbreakers.

As a countermeasure against this evil, buyers of large quantities of stamps began to print their names on the face of the stamps. This was not all together a satisfactory solution because postal employees had difficulties distinguishing between mint and used stamps. Also it opened the door for some advertising on stamps, which is something, frowned upon by the authorities.

Next it was tried to print the name of the buyer on the back under the gum, but here also difficulties were encountered because the printing as a means of identification was hard to recognize after the stamps were affixed to letters and cards.

At one time it was proposed by a group of business men for the government to issue a special set of non-negotiable stamps to alleviate the evil of stamp box pilfering.

However, about this time, a Mr. Joseph Sloper of Liverpool, Engl. whose firm was established in 1858 and today still is in business entered into the picture. Mr. Sloper already had a patent on a machine for perforating checks and documents and for dating railway tickets. By slight alterations he managed to produce satisfactory equipment to punch initials and designs in stamps.

The postal services of Great Britain gave authorization for the use of these machines in 1868 and issued specific rules to be followed in this matter. Size of holes should not exceed the size of the perforations and originally it was also ordained that the Queens head should not be touched by the perforations. This however was later rescinded. Advertising was not permitted but to get around this rule, some companies used their trademark or a special design in their perfins. This, then, is the earliest date of official recognition of perfins.

Originally, Mr. Sloper perforated the stamps for those desirous to use perfins to protect their valuables. Later on he began producing and selling the machines with which others could do their own perforating. The first such order came from T.J. Allman, a publisher in London. His perfin reads ~~TT~~ T J A, 4 mm. Fig. 2-7

At present there are more than 7000 different perfins known on British stamps alone. Some people guess that a total of more than 10,000 will be reached eventually when all research will have been completed.

Talking about the designs on perfins a very interesting one is "HENNY" on Dutch stamps. This perfin belongs to the large Life Insurance Company of 1845: The Netherlands, which chose the name of its beloved president for the protection of its stamps, fig. 3-1.

As we see already, England was not the only country where the postal services authorized perfins. Belgium, Austria and Denmark followed in rapid succession. So did Holland, France and Germany. Today a total of nearly 130 countries are known at one time or another to have permitted perfins to be used for postal pre payment. See table 1

(if table L is omitted for want of space, insert here: it would take too much space to list all these countries but by sending a self-addressed stamped envelop to the author at 8163 Sewell Ave, Fontana, Calif a mimeographed list of the names of these countries will be gladly sent to each interested collector.)

Close to 26000 firms and persons all over the world are known at one time or another to have used perfins for the protection of their petty cash contents. It is estimated that a complete worldwide collection of all issues of all these different perfins would possibly contain nearly 2 million stamps. This figure alone is proof enough of the enormous possibilities available to collectors in this specialized field of philately.

EXPLANATION OF WORD PERFIN.

Perfin is a word coined for these stamps from the two words: PERFORATED INITIALS. In older literature it is also explained as a contraction of the words: "Perforated Identifications".

The British call theirs "Spifs" and give as the origin of this word the begin letters of "Stamps Perforated with Initials of FIRMS". But again in older literature we find spifs explained to be the begin letters of "Stamps perforated for Insurance against Fraud."

FORERUNNER OF U.S. PERFIN: SCHERMACK.

In 1906 the U.S. post office, at the request of manufacturers of stamp selling machines began to make available imperforated stamps in sheets of 400. The manufacturers made coils out of these sheets and sold these coils to the owners of their special stamp vending machines and stamp affixing machines.

The Schermack Co. had a special attachment for their machines which at the same time that one stamp was released, perforated the next one with a set of small identifying holes. These stamps can be recognized from two large rectangular holes, instead of the customary round perforations along each side. They are known to collectors as Schermack ~~III~~ III.

The small round holes through the stamps were arranged in a pattern of a square of 3 x 3 holes. Some were omitted and the left-outs were the key to the identity of the owner of each particular machine. With these 9 holes a total of over 250,000 different patterns are possible. However, no Schermacks are known with less than 4 holes, which reduces the total possibilities to about 40,000. See fig. 3-2

Schermack Co. was later bought out by Mailometer Co, which in turn merged into the present Pitney-Bowes Co. Very rare indeed are Schermack stamps with private perfin designs perforation on them.

U.S. PERFIN.

Not until May, 8, 1908 was a postal regulation issued in U.S.A., officially permitting the use of perfins. It was determined that the holes could not be larger than one 32nd of an inch, fig. 3-3. Also, the entire design could not be over one half inch square or a quarter of a square inch. Fig. 3-4 shows the official perfin of the city of CHICAGO which is an illegal perfin because it violates this latter rule. Although the English regulations allowed larger holes than the American, we find in actual practice that the English perfins are usually made with much smaller holes than the American, fig. 3-5. This is probably caused by the fact that the enormous amount of perfins in England creates quite a lot of duplication of the same initials. For instance there are 29 known varieties of perfins with the letter S. In order to differ even slightly between each one of these the perforating machine manufacturers often use 4, 5 and 6 holes high letters of the same size and this can only be accomplished with needles of very small diameter.

The oldest U.S. perfins are found on stamps of the 1902 series, Minkus 211-224.

Each perfin issuing country had its own peculiar regulations for the use of them. In Holland we find for instance that a rule states that a sample of the perfin to be used shall be filed in the postoffice of the town where the company's office is located in order that all postal employees may familiarize themselves with its design.

FIRST PHILATELIC INTEREST.

The oldest known reference to perfins in the philatelic literature as far as known today is of 1935. At that time the English writer Hugh Vallancey published a little pamphlet with the results of several years of careful study and research in this matter.

It was around 1930 also that the late Warren Travell started his large collection of perfins. He was one of the charter members of the PERFINCLUB in this country, which is the official society of perfin collectors. This club now has more than 200 active members. Dues are \$ 1.50 per year. A monthly bulletin is issued which also carries each month abstracts of the revised U.S. perfin catalog text. The main project of the club is still to get a U.S. perfin catalog text published. Furthermore the club also operates an exchange department where collectors can swap their duplicates for other perfins on a one for one basis.

WHY COLLECT PERFIN.

Not only does perfin collecting open up an enormous latitude of operation for the stamp collector, but the material is relatively cheap. Through it, one obtains a very excellent insight in the industrial activities of the country. Stamp collecting and industry become connected. Above all however, perfin collecting allows for all kinds of research and sleuthing, which for many are the fascinating part of this hobby. One has always to be on the look-out for minute differences which may lead to the discovery of new types.

PERFIN MACHINES.

The older machines usually have 5 dies in a row; later on machines with as many as 10 dies were made, Fig. 4. In some countries machines with only one die are in use and at least one case is known of a machine which perforated an entire sheet in one operation. All older machines were hand operated, but the newest machines are electrically driven.

The amount of stamps in layers which can be perforated by a machine at one time depends on the number of letters in the die and varies from 2 to 6. Overloading in this respect causes needles to break off and perfins to have missing holes. Another cause of broken pins is failure to clean the die holes regularly. British perfins very seldom show evidence of broken pins. In view of their characteristic very small pins, this is proof of the excellent quality of their machines and of the good care they receive. Fig. 3-6 and 3-7 show a good and a bad perfin with missing holes.

Early all English machines were manufactured by Messrs. Sloper. The American machines were produced either by Cummings Co or American Perforator Co. of Chicago.

Altho these companies undoubtedly have an excellent and up-to-date record of all machines ever placed in operation, they will not divulge any of this information to perfin collectors, feeling that this would constitute a break of business etiquette. This gives hunting for perfin identification a special charm and challenge.

PERFIN COLLECTORS AIDS.

The following is a summary of catalogs available to the perfin collector to facilitate his collecting activities:

1-The Perfinclub has produced a complete U.S. perfin catalog text, not illustrated, describing by standard code over 4000 different perfins and listing the names and addresses of the great majority of their owners. It is available to members @ \$ 3.50

2-a complete listing of U.S. perfin illustrations is on the market @ \$ 5.-- postpaid. It is produced on standard loose leaf three ring binder sheets and can be ordered from the author at 8163 Sewell Avenue, Fontana, Calif. It contains over 4000 illustrations.

3-a complete illustrated list of Canadian perfins is available since 1951 from the Collectors Club in NYC. It contains about 148 listings.

4-a revised and up-dated illustrated list of Canadian perfins, edited in 1955 is available @ \$ 1.-- to collectors from the Brit. No. Am. Phil. Society.

5- A complete, illustrated list of Argentine perfins was published in 1952 in an Argentine philatelic monthly. It was edited by Walter B. L. Bose, and lists 252 different perfins.

6-A complete list with illustrations of all 10 Finnish perfins was published in 1953 in a Finnish stamp journal.

7- a complete and illustrated catalog of more than 800 different Belgian perfins has recently been placed on the market @ \$ 4.-- postpaid. It is available through the author at 8163 Sewell Ave. Fontana, Calif.

8- a complete list of Netherlands perfins containing the

names and addresses of more than 700 users is available from the author @ \$ 1.25

9-a complete list with illustrations of all known japanese perfins has been published privately in 1953.

10-a complete list of more than 800 danish perfins with names and addresses is available @ \$ 1.50 from the author.

12- a listing of all known 11 brazilian perfins was published in a brazilian philatelic journal in 1954 by Werner Ahrens.

12- a beginning has been made with the publication of a list of all identified british perfins and monthly new additions are edited by the British Perfin Study Group.

PERFIN ALBUMS AND PAGES.

1- The Peerless Album Co. of Aurora, Ill has put on the market a very neat standardized perfin album page, a sample of which is shown in fig.5. It is used on one side only.

2- The author uses for his own collections a page, illustrated in fig.6, which is used on both sides.

3- a very neat way of designing album pages is illustrated in fig. 7

4-another method of collecting perfins is by using 3 x 5 in. filing cards and placing the perfin in the upper left hand corner. A return address cut from a company envelop can be placed alongside of it to the right. Underneath there is space left for valuable data regarding the perfin user, such as products made, capitalization, foreign countries where it also operates, years of operation, companies it has merged with; year it was founded; branch office locations; total yearly production etc. etc. Alphabetical filing in standard boxes makes for a compact system. Fig.8

5- Last but not least an album specially designed to collect world wide official perfins will soon be placed on the market. It will have space for every known official perfin. Composed of standard 8½ x 11 in. pages, punched for three ring binder its loose leaf design will facilitate insertion of pages for later additions. The 60 pages album will have space for about 1000 official perfins and designs will be shown clearly. It will give the perfin collector the much needed guidance in collecting such desirable specialties as O H M S stamps of Canada in a purposely designed album.

DIFFERENT OBJECTS OF PERFIN COLLECTING.

The entire field of perfin collecting has become so extensive that just like in stamp collecting it has become practically impossible for a collector to embrace it all. A world wide perfin issue collection takes more than 300 standard 3 ring binders and over 32000 sheets with 64000 pages. The perfin collector therefor also has to specialize and choose some section of this immense field of philately as his particular arena of operation.

It will greatly surprise many of my readers when they go over the following summary of possible selections, how extensive this bill of fare is.

Basically, there are 5 fields of operations:

- 1-stamps;
- 2-strips;
- 3-revenues;
- 4-officials;
- 5-semi-officials.

A further separation can be made in U.S. and foreign countries and under the latter one can again take any choice of country or group of countries, just as in general stamp collecting.

Next one can choose between collecting types only, that is one of each kind of perfin regardless of the stamp it is found on. Or, one can collect issues, in which case it is attempted to obtain one stamp of each issue of each type of perfin known. Next one can collect "strips".

This is a perfin attached to an envelop with the return address which identifies the owner.

Interesting also are so-called "topical" collections, such as:
 perfins of: banks; shipping companies; oil companies;
 railroads (there are 180 different ones in the USA alone);
 insurance comp.; colleges and schools; designs; flags; stars;

Under special collections can be listed:

- 1- a collection of perfins of one company only, with perfins of different dates of cancelation for the purpose of studying the condition of its perfin machine and of re-constructing the approximate dates on which different pins were broken;
- 2- a worldwide collection of perfins of one company such as Kodak, shown in fig. 9 with perfins of Holland, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, Spain, France, Germany. Similar collection can be made for International Harvester, United Shoe Machinery Co, and many others.
- 3- A collection of perfins of one company with all the variations of its different branch offices, like Credit Lyonnais in France for instance, of which 38 different branches are known. See fig. 10.
- 4- a collection of identical perfins of different countries. U.S. perfins appear on Canadian stamps. Finnish perfins on stamps of Sweden and Russia.
- 5- a collection of different perfins on one U.S. issue only, such as the Stewart 3 c.
- 6- a collection of U.S. issues, all perfined, regardless of which different perfin it is;
- 7- a collection of one letter perfins, thus completing a set of the complete alphabet;
- 8- a collection of perfins syncopated stamps of Holland. This is a very intriguing subject with about a total of 1100 as the goal. Fig. 11

Next we can specialize in perfinned pre-cancelled. Again we can take either all issues or limit it to types only. If further limitation is desired this can be accomplished by taking one or a few states only.

Under semi-officials one would collect perfins of different states, counties, highway departments, other governmental agencies, governmental railroads, savings banks, housing administration, Veterans Administration etc. etc.

Last of all we would mention under oddities a collection of such items as se-tenant perfins, tete-beche perfins, mirror perfins, double and triple prints, illegal perfins, blocks etc. etc. as shown in fig. 12

A warning should be sounded here against collecting the theoretically possible 8 positions of the same perfin. Looking at the perfin machine carefully one can see that the stamp can be fed in the machine face up and face down and in 4 different positions not to speak of feeding it through the machine under an angle. This makes for 8 different positions of the perfin.

Who ever started trying to collect all these different positions of each perfin rapidly became aware of his fallacy and soon turned back from this to a simple collection of one of each. The collection becomes so cluttered up, cumbersome and oversized that all proper proportions are lost.

Going over the above given list of more than 50 different choices, one cannot but wonder at the surprising variety of collections that can be made with perfins.

MOUNTING PERFINS.

If it is a type collection which is being composed, there is some ground for mounting the stamps face down on dark paper so that the design of the perfin will show up to good advantage. Name and address of the owner can be written underneath each item.

In any issue collection the stamps are of course mounted face up; one type to a 2 sided page. It is good practice to use a second copy of the illustration catalog and cut out the different designs to be pasted at the top of each page as a sample of what that page pertains to. Alongside of this can be recorded the name of the owner and the code for the perfin design and one could even consider to make room for a return address card cut from an envelop from the company at the top of each page.

A very satisfactory method, if both sides of the perfin are desired to be forthwith available for inspection is mounting the perfins on glassine sheets.

WHAT TO DO.

Now we will outline what a collector should do when he becomes interested and enthused about perfins:

- 1-write and speak to all stamp collectors and dealers you know and ask them to please no longer throw perfins away and thus destroy them but to save them for you. Billions of valuable perfins have thus been lost in the very days when they were produced in much greater quantities than today. This loss we will never overcome and it is a forlorn conclusion

that of some perfins we will never discover the original owners name.

2- choose from the list above given the particular field or combination of fields which attract you and concentrate on this. Decide whether it'll be types or issues you'll collect.

3- acquire those catalogs and lists which can be of help to you.

4-gather up an accumulation of perfins.

5- decide on an album from the ones commercially available or design yourself a particular layout of an album page to suit your own taste. In the latter case the Beardcraft stamp space stencils Nos. 1, 2, and 3 will prove to be of valuable help to do a neat job. They are inexpensive and long lasting and very handy.

6- Start developing contacts, and exchanging information. Write letters to other and more experienced perfin collectors; ask questions about this new endeavour of yours. They'll be glad to answer and assist you. Thus you will get educated in this new line of the king of hobbies.

7- as tools you will need a good clear millimeter scale besides the magnifying glass. Later on you may rig up some sort of reproduction equipment to make prints of your perfins for exchanging information with others when you believe that you have discovered any new type.

8- suppose now that you have a shoebox full of perfins of all kind and are ready for sorting:

- First: you sort them by country(face up)
- second: you sort each country by key letter: A, B, C etc.
(this is done face down)
- third: you sort each key letter group by the sequence of the second letter; for instance if it were the C perfins, you would sort them in groups for C, CA, CB, CC, CD, etc. (this again is done with the stamps face down)
- fourth: you take each of these last groups and start sorting them different perfins in it in groups of identical perfins (face down)
- fifth: you take each set of identical perfins and turn them now face up and sort them out according to the different issues and each issue in sequence of face value.
- sixth: you are now ready to compare these with the contents of your album, where you will insert those you did not have yet while the rest goes into envelopes, booklets or on sheets for the exchange club.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR.

When examining perfins and especially when selecting from among several duplicates the one to be mounted in his collection, a perfin collector most of all desires a clear cut, well centered perfin design. Next in line of importance is a clearly readable cancelation as to name of town and if possible also the date. This is often important in helping to identify the owner of a perfin with the aid of a business index, a telephone book or other such listings. The date is important to give a clue as to the length this particular machine has been in operation. After these the normal stamp criteria come into the limelight such as tears, thin spots, perfs missing, straight edges, etc.

The collector of strips will go after an envelop with perfin attached showing a return address which identifies the owner of the perfin. As only those two items are of importance to him, there is little use for saving the entire envelop and often therefore a 2 inch wide "strip" of the front side of the envelop is cut off and saved for reference.

Often the name of a perfin owner can be found on a fiscal stamp perforated with the perfin design and stamped with the owners name for cancelation, especially in England.

OFFSET

~~PERFIN~~ PERIODS

If a company has several branch offices and desires to use one basic perfin design in all of them, the problem of distinguishing between the different offices can be solved in many ways.

First this can be done if the design has an ampersand & in it by varying this ampersand. Fig. 13. There are 4 basic types of ampersand, each having 4 sub types. This allows for 16 different variations.

Another method is by using various periods behind the several letters of the design.

A third method, often used in cases of numerous branches is the method of "offset" periods. The classic example of this method is New York Life Insurance, of which more than 170 branch offices have been recognized by painstaking research. Fig. 14. One or two periods opposite different periods of the basic design make the difference and numerous variations thus are possible.

Johns Manville uses still a different method by simply varying the design of the letters of the perfin and their arrangement. Their perfin consists of the two letter J and M, which can be arranged horizontally, vertically, diagonally up and down, letters with and without serifs and with and without several periods.

Difference between perfins of the same letters can also be obtained by varying the height of the key letter and by varying the number of holes composing these letters.

A quite original method of differentiating between several offices was initiated by the Crane company where their basic C perfin is enclosing a number indicating the branch office. Fig. 15.

The most complicated method of differentiating between several offices is found in the french perfins of the Credit Lyonnais C L, Credit National C N and the italian perfin C I for Credito Italiano.

A very careful study has disclosed that the differences are accomplished by an intricate system of variations in size of letters, number of holes per letter & use of serifs and periods.

PRECANCELS.

Precancels already give a large mailer protection against theft and so there really is not much reason to make perfins out of precancels. Yet, many companies have done this and perfin-precancels have drawn a special interest. More and more pre-cancel collectors are adding perfin-precancels to their collections and thus widening their field of activities considerably.

PERFINS SHOW NATIONAL MIND.

When we study the perfins of the different countries of the world we come to recognize evidence of typical national characteristics in them. We find we can draw conclusions as to the national attitude and the ways of living and thinking of their people from the observations we make when studying these perfins.

For instance, we will generally be able to see that perfins from European countries are nicely centered and seldom have missing perforations. They are almost always applied the proper side up. We find very few splits. All these observations lead us to the conclusion that there is strict control in the offices, that attention is being paid to whatever task has to be done, even such small tasks as perforating stamps. Work is getting proper attention and done with proper care. When we however go through a batch of U.S. perfins we will find very many inferior ones, splits, broken pins, obverts and inverters. In general it can be said that observation of U.S. perfins leads us to the conclusion that very little attention was paid to the task of making them. It must have been hastily, sloppy and without proper care.

No country - to judge by its perfin - however is as bad as Australia. Among 1000 Australian perfins one can hardly find a dozen good ones. Almost every perfin of Australia has one or several holes missing and a batch of Australian perfins is really a mess. One must be in an awful hurry down there and really be racing through life, if the observations made from their perfins are to be an indication.

ODDITIES.

When you really get involved in perfins you may come across some anomalies which will baffle you considerably at first. There is not enough room here to discuss them all but we like to point out a few.

First there is the perfin of the National Bank of the Republic in Chicago. Its machine has 10 different dies each having one letter of the word: NBREpublic. The first three letters are $12\frac{1}{2}$ m.m. the rest only 8m.m. Only by getting the very rare strips of this company can one be sure that he has some of their perfins. And if you by rare chance should get a pair se-tenant with R and E, the R being $12\frac{1}{2}$ mm. and the E only 8 mm. you will really be baffled at first but you will have obtained a real rare collectors item.

There are a few more machines around that perforate a word instead of letters in each stamp. Collectors should be on the look-out for these items. An example is the American Appraisal Co. which has more than one letter of this word per stamp and therefore is somewhat easier to recognize.

Rare also are examples of 2 perfins of different companies on one stamp. The explanation of this could possibly be that one company sends the other a perfin stamp for a prepaid reply. When the stamp arrived at the other company office, it was as a matter of routine channeled to the stamp affixing room, where again as a matter of routine it was perfined again.

There are several examples around of stamps of certain companies found on envelopes with return addresses of other companies.

Probably here again we have an example of postage handed out for prepaid replies and the false return address should not mislead us in doubting the ownership of the perfin. Such examples can also be created after two companies merge and still keep using their original perfin machines.

A real teaser are the perfins S and also the perfin K on dutch stamps. You can find them on envelopes with all kinds of return addresses. For the beginner this is more than just confusing, but the perfin collector soon finds out that these perfins belong to companies which operate newspaperstands at different depots. Here the public often asks for stamps and in order again to protect their merchandise the companies are perforating their stamps with their well known perfin design which then is used by everybody in the country.

Once you have become very familiar with perfins you can indulge in the fun of guessing at the origin of splits and perfins with many missing holes. This is not a very easy game. By matching them with good specimen and holding them thus against the light you can ascertain whether you guessed right. This takes great ability in recognizing perfins.

CONCLUSION.

There is no doubt that the days of maximum perfin production have passed. The meter mail machines are seeing to that. They are slowly but surely encroaching on the perfin domain. Yet there still are enormous quantities of perfins around and being made every day. If we just can put a stop to these being destroyed and thrown away by collectors and dealers who have no use for them, we still will have enough material to satisfy the demand of many, many perfin collectors.

I am deeply convinced that the specialist for instance in Italian stamps can add materially to the enjoyment of this hobby by expanding his collection and adding a group of Italian perfin types to it. This goes for other specialists as well. Many are doing this already. Maybe you should consider this also.

Let me close with an earnest request to all collectors and dealers. Please, do not throw perfins away. If you have no use for them, give them or sell them to us, perfin collectors. It is the ONLY way we have to ~~satisfy~~ our very serious ambition of completing the study of this very interesting sideline of our mutual hobby; philately.